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ABSTRACT

Standards regarding physical facilities for programs serving visually handicapped and blind students are presented. Standards address the following topics: planning for new construction and renovation, suitability of present facilities, activity areas, health and safety, and evaluation. (CL)

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SELF-STUDY AND EVALUATION GUIDE

Physical Facilities

NATIONAL ACCREDITATION COUNCIL
For Agencies Serving the Blind and Visually Handicapped
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INSTRUCTIONS

Two steps should precede the use of this Section:

1. *Section A, Manual of Procedures,* should be read for an understanding of the overall framework and governing principles of the self-study and accreditation process.

2. *Section B, Agency and Community Profile,* should be reviewed, since it embraces the statement of the agency's philosophy of service and program objectives, an indispensable base for evaluation of its work.

* * * * *

All key personnel including members of the agency self-study committee should use this section of the *Self-Study and Evaluation Guide* in studying this aspect of its program.

In the parentheses ( ) preceding the standard, insert a symbol according to the following system to indicate the extent to which agency practice meets the standard:

E - Excellent. The agency meets the standard to the fullest extent and functions excellently in regard to it.

S - Satisfactory. The agency meets the standard to the fullest extent and functions well in regard to it; or it meets the standard to a satisfactory extent (i.e., not full coverage) and functions excellently in regard to it.

A - Adequate. The agency meets the standard to a satisfactory extent and functions acceptably in regard to it.

P - Partial. The agency meets the standard to a satisfactory extent but functions poorly in regard to it; or it meets the standard to a partial extent but functions acceptably in regard to it.

M - Minimal. The agency meets the standard only to a partial extent and functions poorly in regard to it; or it makes no provision for meeting the standard.

NA - The standard does not apply to the agency. Explain under "comments."

Comments. Just as not all of the standards necessarily apply to all agencies, not all activities of a particular agency are necessarily covered by certain standards. The space provided under *Comments* should be used to note any important feature or characteristic of the agency's activities relating to the subject but not explained by the standard or rating. Such notations may be supplemented, if necessary, by supporting data attached to the end of the Section, and by cross-references to other sections of this *Self-Study and Evaluation Guide.* Other comments to explain the agency's rating may also be included here.

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SELF-STUDY AND EVALUATION GUIDE

SECTION C-4, PHYSICAL FACILITIES

1975 Edition

This section of the *SELF-STUDY AND EVALUATION GUIDE* is designed for use in conjunction with the other sections listed below.* Any agency undertaking a self-study will need the first seven sections listed below plus all *D* sections pertaining to the agency's services, an *E* form for each administrative, professional and technical staff member.

The guides may be ordered in separate sections according to each agency's needs from the National Accreditation Council for Agencies Serving the Blind and Visually Handicapped, 79 Madison Avenue, New York, N. Y. 10016.

SELF-STUDY AND EVALUATION GUIDE

Section	Title
A	Manual of Procedures
B	Agency and Community Profile
C-1	Agency Function and Structure
C-2	Accounting for Services and Finances
C-3	Personnel Administration and Volunteer Service
C-4	Physical Facilities
C-5	Public Relations and Fund Raising
D-1	Library Services
D-2	Orientation and Mobility Services
D-3	Rehabilitation Centers
D-4	Workshop Services
D-5	Social Services
D-6	Vocational Services
D-7	Reading Materials
E	Individual Staff Member Information Form
F	Evaluation Summary and Report

*A special guide is available for residential schools *(SELF-STUDY AND EVALUATION GUIDE FOR RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS)*.

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CONTENTS OF THIS SECTION

Page

Introduction 1

The Standards

1. Planning for New Construction and Renovation 2
2. Suitability of Present Facilities 3
3. Activity Areas 5
4. Health and Safety 7
5. Evaluation 13

Programming for Improvement 16

Selected References 19

C-4

PHYSICAL FACILITIES

INTRODUCTION

The Standards for Physical Facilities were developed originally by the ad hoc Commission on Standards and Accreditation of Services for the Blind (COMSTAC) in 1966. This was a pioneering effort to improve services for blind and other visually handicapped persons by utilizing national standards, based on "best practice," through the process of accreditation. The first edition of the Self-Study and Evaluation Guide for use in applying the standards was published in 1968.

Being based on a consensus of what is considered "best practice" in the field, NAC standards are practical rather than theoretical. They are intended to assist agencies in developing sound management and effective forms of service delivery. When conscientiously applied, they serve as quality controls to safeguard the persons receiving services and the funds being expended to provide services. They are intended to be reasonably attainable and are neither the ideal nor the optimum. At the same time, they are meant to offer stimulation for improvement. Finally, they are designed to permit agency staff to measure the results of efforts to accomplish the agency's stated goals.

The revision of this set of standards has been undertaken to insure that they remain timely and relevant. Participating in the revision have been persons and groups from the entire field of blindness and related fields, including accredited and nonaccredited agencies, original formulators of the standards, interest groups and consumer groups. A technical committee studied the recommendations and prepared proposed revisions, which were submitted to a national review. The final codification incorporates recommendations from the national review as well as from the original participants. This review was begun in late 1973 and completed in 1974 with the results reflected in the standards which follow.

Physical facilities are those buildings, grounds and equipment which are an integral part of the structural features of the agency. Certain criteria are used in the assessment of the physical facilities (both buildings and grounds) included in these standards:

(1) The physical facilities of agencies reflect a respect for the person served by the agency, recognizing that person's:

--dignity as an individual;

--potential for productive participation in society;

--basic needs, including those common to all persons and those

related to visual or other physical handicaps;

--right to participate effectively in agency planning, policy development, service delivery and evaluation.

(2) They contribute to rendering effective service within the framework of the goals and objectives of the agency program.

(3) They are relevant to the needs of the community and accessible to actual or potential service users whatever their age and visual or other circumstances.

The agency assesses its physical facilities on an ongoing basis through systematic planning for improvement and periodic evaluation of facility use and effectiveness. The persons using the facilities are involved or represented in a meaningful way in this evaluation process.

THE STANDARDS

1. PLANNING FOR RENOVATION OR NEW CONSTRUCTION

( ) 1.1 PLANNING. Planning is an integral part of agency management and is done systematically in advance of initial design for new construction or for expansion or renovation.

Comments:

( ) 1.2 PARTICIPATION IN PLANNING. Planning participants include agency board and staff, architects, builders, persons served and other concerned individuals or community groups.

Comments:

( ) 1.3 RELEVANCE OF PLANNING. Planning for physical facilities is consistent with the agency's overall planning and its statement of philosophy of service and program objectives as approved by its governing body and other suitable authority.

( ) 1.3.1 The plan is suited to the needs of the community.

( ) 1.3.2 The plan is suited to the characteristics of the persons served (age, sex, actual and potential abilities).

( ) 1.3.3 The plan insures physical facilities which promote accessibility, and suitability for program and persons served, health and safety, and other valid objectives.

( ) 1.3.4 Relevant advances in architectural design, practice and equipment are considered to help promote functional and attractive physical facilities in planning.

( ) 1.3.5 Plans take into account future as well as present needs and anticipate the need to permit future modification and to benefit from advances in practice, equipment and construction.

( ) 1.3.6 Plans for site selection take into consideration accessibility, topography, zoning and applicable geological and environmental conditions.

( ) 1.3.7 Plans include provisions for land that may be required for future modifications.

( ) 1.3.8 The agency replaces or disposes of physical structures which are obsolete or no longer functional.

Comments:

( ) 1.4 CONTINUITY OF SERVICES. During construction or remodeling of physical facilities, measures are taken to provide continuity of services.

Comments:

2. SUITABILITY OF PRESENT FACILITIES

( ) 2.1 AGENCY PURPOSES AND GOALS. The facilities reflect the agency's statement of philosophy and program objectives and provide a setting in which the philosophy and program objectives are carried out.

Comments:

( ) 2.2 PERSONS SERVED. The facilities are designed for the persons served, with particular attention to such characteristics as age, sex, actual and potential abilities, and social and economic background.

Comments:

( ) 2.3 SERVICE PROGRAM. The facilities suit the agency's program of services and promote effective staff performance.

( ) 2.3.1 The facilities for service programs reflect NAC standards for services and applicable requirements of other organizations.

Comments:

( ) 2.4 LOCATION. The facility is so located that it is conveniently accessible.

( ) 2.4.1 It is located near public transportation, provides adequate vehicular access and parking, and permits travel for shopping and other community transactions when users of services and staff are in residence.

Comments:

( ) 2.5 SAFETY OF LOCATION. Proper measures are instituted and maintained to assure the safety of persons coming to the facility.

( ) 2.5.1 Traffic lights, crosswalks or other appropriate provisions are made for safe crossing and safe access from parking lot or street by persons using the facility.

Comments:

( ) 2.6 GROUNDS. The size and other characteristics of the grounds are suitable for the program.

( ) 2.6.1 There is sufficient space for current operations.

( ) 2.6.2 The grounds are free of hazards and attractively designed.

( ) 2.6.3 Signs and other directions are provided to assist persons in specific buildings and areas on the grounds.

Comments:

3. ACTIVITY AREAS

( ) 3.1 DESIGN AND EQUIPMENT. Areas are suitably designed and equipped for the various activities carried on within them.

Comments:

( ) 3.2 RELATED ACTIVITIES. Spaces for related and compatible activities are arranged conveniently to each other in a logical and functional manner.

Comments:

( ) 3.3 GROUPING OF AREAS. The grouping of activity areas minimizes such interfering conditions as noise, odors, fumes, traffic, contagion, and other nuisances or hazards.

Comments:

( ) 3.4 RECEIVING, STORAGE. The layout includes adequate areas for receiving, storing, distributing and disposing of supplies and materials.

Comments:

( ) 3.5 TRAFFIC PATTERNS. The layout promotes efficiency and safety of vehicular and pedestrian traffic indoors and on the grounds.

( ) 3.5.1 Reception areas are adjacent to points of entry and conveniently accessible.

( ) 3.5.2 Areas designed for mass use are located so as to provide ease of entry and exit.

Comments:

( ) 3.6 UTILIZATION BY PHYSICALLY HANDICAPPED PERSONS. Activity areas are designed to give due consideration to utilization by persons whose physical handicaps may impair their mobility or limit their use of arms and legs.

Comments:

( ) 3.7 IDENTIFICATION OF AREAS. Walkways, activity rooms, storage rooms, and assembly areas are all clearly identified for all persons using them.

Comments:

( ) 3.8 PROVISIONS FOR PRIVACY. The physical facilities are designed and equipped to assure the persons served and the agency staff of privacy and confidentiality where required.

( ) 3.8.1 Restrooms are conveniently located and provide privacy.

Comments:

4. HEALTH AND SAFETY

( ) 4.1 CODES AND ORDINANCES. The facility is in compliance with all applicable codes and ordinances and statutes established by governmental or underwriting bodies on such matters as:

---- Architectural barriers

---- Planning and zoning

---- Building and structure

---- Plumbing and sanitation

---- Heating and ventilating

---- Electricity, gas, oil and coal

---- Water supply

---- Sewage and waste disposal

---- Food preparation and service

---- Materials handling

---- Fire and safety

---- Occupational safety and health

( ) 4.1.1 The facility supplements local codes and ordinances when necessary to meet recognized (such as NAC, federal, professional) standards.

( ) 4.1.2 Current permits or certificates, where applicable, are obtained by and kept on file in the agency.

Comments:

( ) 4.2 FREEDOM FROM UNDUE HAZARDS. All areas are free of undue hazards to the health and welfare of all persons using the facility.

Comments:

( ) 4.3 SENSORY SAFEGUARDS. Measures are in effect to safeguard the sight and sensory capabilities of all persons using the facility.

Comments:

( ) 4.4 DRAINAGE. The grounds are well drained and remain in sanitary and safe condition in all weather.

Comments:

( ) 4.5 SANITATION. Sanitary conditions are present throughout the buildings including restroom facilities.

Comments:

( ) 4.6 LIGHTING. Sufficient lighting is provided to assure safe passage of pedestrians on grounds and in buildings.

( ) 4.6.1 Activity areas are lighted consistent with safety standards.

( ) 4.6.2 Use of high reflective colors such as yellow or white are used on curbs or first steps as provided in PL 91-596, the Occupational Safety and Health Act.

Comments:

( ) 4.7 SLIP PREVENTION. All-weather slip-retardant surfaces are provided on indoor and outdoor walkways and stairs.

Comments:

( ) 4.8 FREEDOM FROM OBSTACLES. Walkways and doorways are free of obstacles, and are sufficient in size and number to provide safe movement at all times.

( ) 4.8.1 Suitable modifications of walkways, entries and other physical facilities are provided in compliance with standards regarding architectural barriers, to accommodate persons using the facility who utilize wheelchairs, crutches or other ambulatory aids.

Comments:

( ) 4.9 HEATING AND VENTILATION. Facilities for heating, cooling, ventilating and humidity control are provided and maintained for the health and comfort of occupants.

Comments:

( ) 4.10 PEST EXTERMINATION. Where pest extermination services are required, they are provided with sufficient frequency and effectiveness.

Comments:

( ) 4.11 APPROPRIATENESS OF SAFETY MEASURES. Specialized safety measures are provided as needed for aged, multihandicapped, young and other special populations served.

( ) 4.11.1 Children in residence receive twenty-four hour supervision.

( ) 4.11.2 Handrails, sufficiently wide doorways and other safeguards are installed in restrooms or other areas used by aged and multihandicapped persons.

Comments:

( ) 4.12 ACTIVITIES AND EQUIPMENT. Safety features and procedures are related to the types of activities undertaken and the equipment used in the respective areas.

( ) 4.12.1 Pieces of equipment having motors or moving parts are properly arranged, guarded to prevent personal injury, and identified during orientation to the building.

( ) 4.12.2 Where individuals may be exposed to toxic, radioactive or other hazardous agents, proper protective devices are provided and medical checkups arranged for the exposed individuals at recommended time intervals.

Comments:

( ) 4.13 TRAFFIC VOLUME. Safety features are related to the volume of traffic experienced at peak times in each particular area of the facility.

( ) 4.13.1 The greater the number of persons in a particular area, the greater the number of exits and size of passageways.

Comments:

( ) 4.14 FIRST AID. Adequate first aid facilities and equipment are provided.

( ) 4.14.1 The agency has a written procedure for handling both minimal and severe emergencies.

( ) 4.14.2 Key personnel receive instruction in the use of first aid techniques.

( ) 4.14.3 There is adequate personnel coverage to implement the procedures for handling emergencies.

( ) 4.14.4 Arrangements have been made or are readily available with hospital or other emergency services for handling severe injuries or

illnesses.

( ) 4.14.5 Records are kept of all injuries and treatment.

Comments:

( ) 4.15 FIRE AND DISASTER PROTECTION. All physical facilities are located, constructed and equipped to minimize the possibility of fire.

( ) 4.15.1 Provisions are made to afford persons using the facility proper protection in the event of fire or other emergencies such as earthquakes, floods, hurricanes, tornadoes, power failures, and other potential disasters.

Comments:

( ) 4.16 SMOKING AREAS. Smoking and non-smoking areas are clearly specified and identified during orientation to the building.

Comments:

( ) 4.17 FLAMMABLE MATERIALS. When storage or use of flammable materials is necessary, special safety precautions are taken.

Comments:

( ) 4.18 FIRE PREVENTION PROGRAM. A program of fire prevention, planned with local officials, is maintained to make persons conscious of and familiar with the safety rules and preventive measures to be observed.

( ) 4.18.1 A written fire and disaster plan, jointly prepared with local fire and civil defense officials, is in force and kept current.

( ) 4.18.2 The plan contains such provisions as prompt alerting of and co-operation with local fire fighting resources, evacuation of persons using the facility, procedures for putting out incipient fires, and protection of essential records.

Comments:

( ) 4.19 EXITS. More than one exit is provided from all buildings and from each floor.

( ) 4.19.1 Fire exits, corridors and stairways are well lighted, clear of obstacles, and ready for use.

( ) 4.19.2 Exit doors are equipped with panic bars or other easily identifiable releases that can be readily operated in an emergency.

( ) 4.19.3 Emergency lighting is provided and maintained along all routes of exits in the event of a power cut-off.

Comments:

( ) 4.20 FIRE EXTINGUISHING EQUIPMENT. Suitable fire extinguishing equipment is provided in sufficient numbers and maintained in operative condition in accordance with the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) Life Safety Code 1973 and local fire codes.

( ) 4.20.1 Staff and persons served are instructed in the use of such equipment.

( ) 4.20.2 The equipment is located so that it is accessible and near potentially hazardous areas, paths of exit and other strategic places.

( ) 4.20.3 It is regularly inspected (with inspection recorded) and serviced.

Comments:

( ) 4.21 FIRE ALARMS. Fire alarms are provided in accordance with provisions of the Life Safety Code 1973 (NFPA) and local fire codes.

( ) 4.21.1 Fire alarm systems are:

--clearly distinguishable from other audible systems;

--connected with the local fire department whenever feasible.

--arranged to provide ready identification of the fire location;

--replaced by an available alternate system in the event of power failure.

( ) 4.21.2 Fire and smoke detection systems are installed whenever required in accordance with provisions of the Life Safety Code 1973 (NFPA) and local fire codes.

( ) 4.21.3 Special warning measures are in effect for deaf-blind persons using the facility, such as pairing a deaf-blind person with a hearing person as an emergency buddy, or installing a fan or vibrator connected to the alarm system in the deaf-blind person's activity area.

( ) 4.21.4 Periodic fire drills are held in accordance with provisions of the Life Safety Code 1973 (NFPA) and local fire codes.

Comments:

( ) 4.22 MAINTENANCE AND HOUSEKEEPING. The condition of the physical facilities gives evidence of planful and effective on-going maintenance and housekeeping.

Comments:

( ) 4.23 SAFETY WARNINGS. The agency posts appropriate warnings regarding glass doors, projecting equipment, emergency exits, use of elevators, and other potential hazards.

Comments:

5. EVALUATION

( ) 5.1 SYSTEMATIC EVALUATION. The effectiveness of the use of physical structures and grounds is evaluated in an ongoing, systematic manner.

Comments:

( ) 5.2 PARTICIPATION IN EVALUATION. Agency board and staff, persons served, and concerned individuals or community groups (such as fire department personnel), architects and builders, participate in the evaluations of the use of physical facilities.

Comments:

( ) 5.3 FREQUENCY OF EVALUATION. Such evaluations are conducted and reported in writing on a regularly scheduled basis and at least annually.

Comments:

( ) 5.4 GOALS OF EVALUATION. Evaluations are planned to assess numerous factors, including the extent to which:

( ) 5.4.1 Physical facilities accommodate the needs of the persons served.

( ) 5.4.2 Physical facilities permit easy access by all persons using the facilities;

( ) 5.4.3 Facilities are designed and equipped to enable the agency to carry out its philosophy of service and program objectives;

( ) 5.4.4 Health and safety measures are met;

( ) 5.4.5 The building, grounds and equipment are well-planned, maintained, refurbished and replaced to insure that they are in attractive, clean and usable condition.

Comments:

( ) 5.5 SELF-INSPECTION. Building inspection is conducted by the agency with sufficient frequency to assure the protection of life and property from fire or other potential disaster.

( ) 5.5.1 Where possible, the cooperation of local fire officials is secured in conducting such inspections.

( ) 5.5.2 Records of inspections are maintained and deficiencies are noted, together with remedial actions taken.

Comments:

( ) 5.6 INDEPENDENT INSPECTION. All buildings are inspected at least once a year by a municipal official, underwriter's representative, or other duly constituted authority.

( ) 5.6.1 Records of such inspections, including findings and actions taken, are maintained on file within the agency.

Comments:

( ) 5.7 HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMITTEE. A committee representative of all persons using the facilities meets regularly and makes recommendations concerning health and safety, fire and disaster plans, and safety drills.

Comments:

PROGRAMMING FOR IMPROVEMENT

It is desirable for agencies to develop plans for improving physical facilities. Such planning usually flows from the ongoing evaluation in a continuous cycle of planning, implementation and assessment. The strengths and weaknesses uncovered through the self-study and evaluation process can assist in the development of a timetable for effecting further improvements. Participants in the planning include agency board, staff and persons served, as well as other concerned individuals and community groups.

The following six questions are designed to permit the agency to describe its program for evaluation and improvement of physical facilities. The questions are also designed to help the Commission on Accreditation evaluate the agency in terms of one of the Commission's governing principles: "If deficiencies exist, the agency is willing to remedy them, and gives evidence of being capable of effecting the needed remedies within a reasonable period of time."

It should be borne in mind that the principles of evaluation and planning for improvement apply equally to weaker as well as stronger areas of physical facilities. The questions that follow should be answered by indicating both: (a) specific plans for improvement where the standards presently are not met; and (b) further improvements planned where the standards presently are met.

1. What improvements were made in the previous agency fiscal year?

2. What improvements are under way in the present agency fiscal year?

3. What improvements are definitely planned for the succeeding agency fiscal year?

4. What improvements are contemplated in agency long-range planning?

5. How are these improvements related to the ongoing planning and evaluation processes of the agency?

6. How have the agency's physical facilities affected the impact of its programs and services upon the persons served?

Name of Agency_____ Date_____

Committee Chairman_____

Name_____ Signature_____

Name_____ Signature_____

Name_____ Signature_____

Name_____ Signature_____

Name_____ Signature_____

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LEGISLATION:

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U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. Architectural Barriers Act of 1968, PL 90-480 as amended by the Act of March 5, 1970, PL 91-205.

U.S. Department of Labor. Williams-Steiger Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970, PL 91-596.

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